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Kristi Noem

Kristi Lynn Noem (/nuəm/; ^[1] née Arnold; November 30, 1971) is an American politician serving as the 33rd and current governor of South Dakota since January 5, 2019. A member of the Republican Party, she was the U.S. Representative for South Dakota's at-large congressional district from 2011 to 2019 and a member of the South Dakota House of Representatives from 2007 to 2011. Noem was elected governor in 2018 and is South Dakota's first female governor.^[2]

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Noem in 2011

33rd Governor of South Dakota

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 5, 2019

Lieutenant

Larry Rhoden

Preceded by

Dennis Daugaard

Member of the

U.S. House of Representatives
from South Dakota's at-large district

In office

January 3, 2011 – January 3, 2019

Preceded by

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin

Succeeded by

Dusty Johnson

Member of the

South Dakota House of Representatives
from the 6th district

In office

January 9, 2007 – January 11, 2011

Preceded by

Art Frysle

Succeeded by

Burt Tulson

Personal details

Born

Kristi Lynn Arnold

November 30, 1971

External links

Early life and education

Kristi Arnold was born to Ron and Corinne Arnold in Watertown, South Dakota, and raised with her siblings on the family ranch and farm in rural Hamlin County.^[3] She graduated from Hamlin High School in 1990, and won the South Dakota Snow Queen title. She credited the experience with helping her polish her public speaking and promotional skills.^[4] After high school, she enrolled at Northern State University. She married Bryon Noem at age 20.^[5]

At 22, Noem left college to help run her family's ranch after her father was killed in a farm machinery accident.^{[3][6]} Noem added a hunting lodge and restaurant to the property, and all her siblings moved back to help expand the businesses.^[3]

After her father's death, Noem stopped attending college full time but subsequently took classes at the Watertown campus of Mount Marty College and at South Dakota State University and online classes from the University of South Dakota.^{[3][4]}

After being elected to Congress, Noem continued her education, taking online courses. *The Washington Post* dubbed her Capitol Hill's "most powerful intern" for receiving college intern credits from her position as a member of Congress.^[7] She earned a B.A. in political science from South Dakota State University in 2012.^[8]

South Dakota House of Representatives

In 2006, Noem won a seat in the South Dakota House of Representatives representing the 6th District (comprising parts of Beadle, Clark, Codington, Hamlin, and Kingsbury counties, but not including Watertown). In 2006, she won with 39% of the vote.^[9] In 2008, she was reelected to a second term with a plurality of 41%.^[10]

Noem served for four years, from 2007 to 2010; she was an Assistant Majority Leader during her last year.^{[11][12]} In 2009 and 2010 she sponsored bills to lower the age of compulsory education in South Dakota to 16, after it had been raised to 18 in 2008, arguing that requiring school attendance until age 18 has not been proven to improve graduation rates.^[13] Supporters of the higher age argue that it increases graduation rates and motivates students who would otherwise drop out.^[14]

She was on the State Affairs Committee and Taxation Committee^[15]

U.S. House of Representatives

Elections

2010

In 2010, Noem ran for South Dakota's at-large seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.^[16] She won the Republican primary with a plurality of 42% of the vote against South Dakota Secretary of State Chris Nelson and State Representative Blake Curd.^[17] Her primary opponents endorsed her in the general election.^[11]

Political party	Republican
Spouse(s)	Bryon Noem (m. 1992)
Children	3
Residence	Governor's Residence
Education	South Dakota State University (BA)

Noem's opponent, incumbent Democratic U.S. Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, emphasized her own record of independence from the Democratic caucus, including her votes against health care reform, the Wall Street bailouts, and the cap-and-trade energy bill. In response, Noem repeatedly highlighted Herseth Sandlin's vote for Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House. According to *The Washington Post*, "Nationally, Herseth Sandlin [was] considered a rising star in her party, the Democrats' own "mama grizzly" straight out of the heartland [...] but, 2010 is a different time, and Herseth Sandlin, 39, faces her most serious threat yet. Noem, 38, is ... a made-for-Fox News star in her own right."^[18] During the 2010 election cycle, Noem outraised Herseth Sandlin, \$2.3 million to \$2.1 million.^{[19][20]} Noem received 84% of her cash from individual donors while Herseth Sandlin received 56% from political action committees.^{[19][20][21]} Noem defeated Herseth Sandlin, 48% to 46%.^[22]

2012

Noem was reelected to a second term, defeating Democrat Matthew Varilek, 57%–43%.^[23]

2014

Noem was reelected to a third term, defeating Democrat Corinna Robinson, 67%–33%.^[24]

2016

Noem was reelected to a fourth term, defeating Democrat Paula Hawks, 64%–36%.^[25]

Tenure

Noem was the fourth woman to represent South Dakota in the U.S. Congress.^[26] She and freshman U.S. Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina were elected by acclamation of the 2011 House Republican 87-member freshman class to be liaisons to the House Republican leadership, making Noem the second woman member of House GOP leadership.^[27] According to *The Hill*, her role was to push the leadership to make significant cuts to federal government spending and to help Speaker John Boehner manage the expectations of the freshman class.^[28] In March 2011, Republican U.S. Representative Pete Sessions of Texas named Noem one of the 12 regional directors for the National Republican Congressional Committee during the 2012 election campaign.^{[3][29]}



Representative Noem in 2013

Taxes

In 2018, Noem was reported to have "pitched the idea to members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus" to attach her online sales tax bill to the government funding package as part of an omnibus. A court case under consideration in the South Dakota Supreme Court involved requiring "certain out-of-state retailers to collect its sales taxes." Noem said that South Dakota businesses (and by extension businesses nationwide) "could be forced to comply with 1,000 different tax structures nationwide without the tools necessary to do so", adding that her legislation "provides a necessary fix."^[30]

Noem called the budget deficit one of the most important issues facing Congress, and cosponsored H. J. Res. 2, which would require that total spending for any fiscal year not exceed total receipts.^{[31][32]} She cited the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Medicaid, high-speed rail projects, cap-and-trade technical assistance, and subsidies for the Washington Metro rapid transit system as examples of federal programs she would like to see cuts in.^{[33][31][34][35]}

She indicated that she would vote to raise the federal spending limit,^[27] and wanted to eliminate the estate tax,^[36] lower the corporate tax rate, and simplify the tax code.^[31] She also said she would not raise taxes to balance the budget.^[37]

Human trafficking

Noem promoted legislation to combat human trafficking and sexual slavery.^{[38][39]}

Health care

Noem opposes the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) and has voted to repeal it.^{[40][41]} Having unsuccessfully sought to repeal the law, she has sought to defund it while retaining measures such as the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, the provision allowing parents to keep their children on their health insurance plan into their 20s, and the high-risk pools.^[42] New provisions that Noem wanted to add to federal law included limits on medical malpractice lawsuits and allowing patients to buy health insurance plans from other states.^[42] She supported cuts to Medicaid funding proposed by Republican Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan that would reduce benefits for South Dakota Medicaid recipients by 55 percent.^[33]

Social issues

Noem is pro-life.^[43] She has the support of Susan B. Anthony List,^[44] and said after her election that she hoped to maintain a 100% anti-abortion voting record.^[36]

Energy and environment



U.S. Representative Noem (center) alongside fellow U.S.

Representatives Donna Edwards and Sheila Jackson Lee at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in May 2013

Noem has said that the U.S. must end its dependence on foreign oil. To achieve that goal, Noem says Congress should encourage conservation of existing resources.^[45] She supports continuing ethanol subsidies that benefit her state.^[46] Noem opposes ending federal subsidies for oil companies.^[33]

Noem supported the Keystone XL Pipeline and promised to continue to work for its construction after the U.S. Senate voted down legislation to advance the pipeline through Congress.^[47] Noem helped the House pass the legislation on November 14, 2014.^[47]

Noem opposed a bill introduced by South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson that would designate over 48,000 acres (190 km²) of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland as protected wilderness.^[48] She supports the current designation of the land as a national grassland.^[49] She pointed out that the land is already managed as roadless areas similar to wilderness^[50] and argued that changing the land's designation to wilderness would further limit leaseholder access to the land and imperil grazing rights.^{[49][50]}

Noem supports off-shore oil drilling.^[51] She co-sponsored three bills that she argued would reduce American dependence on foreign oil by ending the 2010 United States deepwater drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico and reopening sales on oil leases in the Gulf and off the coast of Virginia.^[52]

In 2011, Noem sponsored a measure to block Environmental Protection Agency funding for tighter air pollution standards for coarse particulates.^[53]

Foreign affairs

Noem supported the American military intervention in the 2011 Libyan civil war, but questioned whether America intervened to protect civilians, or whether the U.S. military would try to remove Libya's leader, Muammar Gaddafi.^[54] In March 2011, Noem called on Obama to provide more information about America's role in the conflict, characterizing his statements as vague and ambiguous.^{[54][55]}

Fundraising

Since her election, Noem raised 56 percent of donations from individuals and 44 percent from political action committees.^[56] On March 8, 2011, she announced the formation of a leadership political action committee, KRISTI PAC.^[57] Noem said she would use the PAC to pay expenses and support other Republican candidates. Former South Dakota Lieutenant Governor Steve Kirby is the treasurer of the PAC.^{[58][59][60]}

Noem was among the top freshman Republicans in PAC fundraising in the first quarter of 2011, raising \$169,000 from PACs and hosting at least 10 Washington fundraisers.^[61] She said she had no plans to join the House Tea Party Caucus.^[62]

Immigrants and refugees

Noem supported President Donald Trump's 2017 executive order that suspended the U.S. refugee program for 120 days and banned all travel to the U.S. by nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries for 90 days.^[63] She said she supported a temporary ban on accepting refugees from "terrorist-held" areas,^[64] but "did not address whether she supports other aspects of the order, which led to the detention of legal U.S. residents such as green-card holders and people with dual citizenship as they reentered the country" in the aftermath of the order's issuance.^[63]

Committee assignments

▪ Committee on Ways and Means

- Subcommittee on Human Resources
- Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures

Caucus memberships

- Republican Study Committee^[65]
- Congressional Cement Caucus
- Congressional Arts Caucus^[66]
- Afterschool Caucuses^[67]
- Congressional Western Caucus^[68]

Governor of South Dakota

2018 election

On November 14, 2016, Noem announced that she would not seek reelection to Congress but instead run for governor of South Dakota in 2018.^[69] She defeated incumbent South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley in the June 5 primary, 56% to 44%,^{[70][71]} and defeated Democratic nominee Billie Sutton in the general election, 51% to 47.6%.^[72]

Tenure

Noem was sworn in as governor of South Dakota on January 5, 2019. She is the first woman in South Dakota history to hold that office.^[73]

Concealed carry

On January 31, 2019, Noem signed a bill into law abolishing the permit requirement to carry a concealed handgun.^{[74][75][76]}

Abortion

On March 20, 2019, Noem signed a bill into law requiring South Dakota's state universities to promote and protect intellectual diversity,^[77] and on the same day, she signed several bills restricting abortion. Noem said the bills would "crack down on abortion providers in South Dakota" by requiring providers to use a state form women must sign before they can end a pregnancy. She also said, "A strong and growing body of medical research provides evidence that unborn babies can feel, think, and recognize sounds in the womb. These are people, they must be given the same basic dignities as anyone else."^{[78][79]}



Noem in 2019.

Trade

In February 2019, she said that the Trump administration's trade wars had devastated South Dakota.^[80]

"Meth, We're On It" Campaign

On November 18, 2019, Noem released a new meth awareness campaign named "Meth, We're On It". The campaign was widely mocked and Noem was criticized for using a Minnesota firm.^[81]

COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Noem took a hands-off approach.^[82] As of April 14, 2020, she was one of seven governors who had not issued statewide stay-at-home orders;^[83] instead, she emphasized her state's role in evaluating hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial drug, as a purported treatment for COVID-19. It was heavily promoted by President Trump^[84] but found to be ineffective and had dangerous side effects.^[85] South Dakota had one of the largest coronavirus outbreaks in the U.S., as Noem resisted ordering workers to stay home.^[86] The Smithfield Foods production plant in Sioux Falls experienced four deaths, with nearly 1,300 workers and their family members testing positive for the disease.^{[87][88][89]} Smithfield was fined \$13,454 by the federal government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for the violations.^[87] Noem pointed out that this production facility was in full operation as an essential food manufacturing facility.^[90] Forty-eight of Smithfield's workers were hospitalized.^[91] On April 6, Noem issued an executive order that said people "shall" follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;^[92] she also ordered everyone over age 65 in two counties to stay home for three weeks.^{[93][94]}

Noem did not mandate social distancing or the wearing of face masks at a July 3 event at Mount Rushmore that featured Trump. Health experts warned that large gatherings without social distancing or mask-wearing posed a risk to public health.^[95]

Sixteen weeks after Trump's executive order that provided enhanced unemployment benefits amounting to \$300 weekly from the federal government, Noem opted out of the program, citing a low state unemployment rate.^[96] South Dakota was the only state to refuse the assistance.^[97] Its jobless rate in June was 7.2%, up from 3.1% in March, though it was down from 10.9% in April.^[91] Acceptance of the funding required the state to augment the benefit by \$100 unless other jobless assistance allowed for the match to be waived.^[97] By September 2020, over 550 students had become infected at the state's universities; 200 more cases had been reported in K-12 schools.^[91]

South Dakota is one of two states in the US to offer no emergency financial assistance to renters during the pandemic^[98].

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is held annually in Sturgis, South Dakota, for ten days each August.^[99] Concerns about the possible spread of COVID-19 and travel restrictions were expected to reduce attendance in 2020.^[100] The City Council surveyed local opinion regarding the rally and 62% of respondents favored canceling the event.^[91] Some health officials and local leaders wanted to cancel the rally, but that proved impossible since many events take place beyond the city limits.^{[101][102]} The 250,000 participants were recommended but not required to wear face masks in a state that had seen 9,371 confirmed cases, and 144 deaths due to the coronavirus (.0016% of the population).^[103] Several checkpoints to stop outsiders were put up on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, an action that Noem and federal officials considered illegal.^[104] Noem sought federal assistance in challenging tribal authority, citing resistance to the Keystone XL pipeline in her request.^[91] The final traffic count was about 462,000, with many attendees not wearing masks or observing social distancing.^[105]

Public health notices were issued for saloons and a tattoo parlor in Sturgis, and for the Bumpin' Buffalo Bar and Grill in Hill City.^{[106][107][95][108]} Some exposures in Minnesota could not be traced to specific locations. A Minnesota public health official urged all rally-goers to monitor for symptoms for 14 days, adding, "if you are feeling ill after returning from the event, please get tested and self-isolate while you wait for the test results."^{[109][110]} Two of the cases reported in Minnesota were employees or volunteers who had been to Sturgis.^{[111][112]} By August 24, 76 cases were linked to the rally, in South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska and Wyoming, with additional reports of cases in North Dakota and Washington State.^[113] The number rose to 103 on August 24, in at least eight states, including 37 in South Dakota, and cases in Wisconsin, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Washington and North Dakota.^{[112][114]} On August 26, 6 cases were reported in New Hampshire.^[115] On August 27, over 20 cases were reported in Colorado.^[116] On August 27, the results of mass testing in Sturgis became available. Out of 650 tests there were 26 positive results, all asymptomatic.^[117] As of August 28, 46 cases in Minnesota had been linked to the rally, including two hospitalizations. An additional cluster of secondary transmission from the rally was identified at a wedding.^{[118][119][120][110][113][112]} On September 2, the first COVID-19 death related to the Sturgis rally was reported in Minnesota.^[121]

The number of infections increased substantially, although health authorities suspect the real number could be far higher because many attendees refused to cooperate with contact tracers.^[122] A paper by the IZA Institute of Labor Economics, based in Germany, estimated the infection spreading potential of the rally at 267,000 cases.^[123] Russia Television Network, which is described as a propaganda organ for the Russian Federation government,^[124] claimed the IZA study was "bogus."^[125] A partnership between Slate Magazine, New America, and Arizona State University also contested the findings.^[126] The Slate analysis did find the IZA calculations for Meade County, South Dakota, where Sturgis is, estimated between 177 and 195 local cases, to be consistent with the raw data.^[126]

Noem declared the study "fiction" and an "attack on those who exercised their personal freedom to attend Sturgis."^[123] She added, "Predictably, some in the media breathlessly report on this non-peer-reviewed model, built on incredibly faulty assumptions that do not reflect the actual facts and data here in South Dakota."^[123] State epidemiologist Joshua Clayton said, "from what we know, the results do not align with what we know."^[123] By September 8, South Dakota reported 124 residents had become ill after attending the rally.^[123]

In September, while coronavirus cases were surging in South Dakota (it had the country's second-highest rate of new cases per capita), Noem announced that she would use \$5 million in coronavirus relief funds to fund a tourism ad campaign to draw visitors to the state.^[82] She used \$819,000 of those funds to have the state's Department of Tourism run a 30-second Fox News commercial she narrated during the 2020 Republican National Convention.^[91]

Presidential elector

On June 20, 2020, at the Republican State Convention, Noem was chosen to be one of South Dakota's three Republican presidential electors, along with Lieutenant Governor Larry Rhoden and Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg.^[127]

Controversies

Governor's mansion fence

In May 2019, Noem proposed to build a fence around the governor's mansion estimated to cost approximately \$400,000. The proposal was not well-received and she eventually retracted it.^{[128][129]} On August 12, 2020, it was announced that Noem would again be moving forward with putting a fence around the governor's residence, following her security team's advice.^[130]

Hiring family members

Noem hired her daughter, Kennedy, while still in college and then raised her annual salary from \$40,000 to \$60,000 seven months later. Noem's administration also hired her son-in-law Kyle Peters for about \$60,000 per year.^{[131][132]}

Electoral history

2018 South Dakota gubernatorial election ^[72]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>	<u>Kristi Noem</u>	172,912	51.0%
<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Billie Sutton</u>	161,454	47.6%
<u>Libertarian</u>	<u>Kurt Evans</u>	4,848	1.4%
		Total votes	339,214
Republican hold		100%	

2018 Republican primary election – South Dakota governor ^[70]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>	<u>Kristi Noem</u>	57,437	56.0
<u>Republican</u>	<u>Marty Jackley</u>	45,069	44.0
	Total votes	102,506	100

2016 South Dakota's At-large congressional district election			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Kristi Noem (Incumbent)	237,163	64.10
Democratic	Paula Hawks	132,810	35.90
		Total votes	369,973
			100

South Dakota's At-large congressional district election, 2014 ^[24]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Kristi Noem (Incumbent)	183,834	67
Democratic	Corinna Robinson	92,485	33
		Total votes	276,319
			100

2012 South Dakota's At-large congressional district election ^[133]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Kristi Noem (Incumbent)	207,640	57
Democratic	Matt Varilek	153,789	43
		Total votes	361,429
			100
<u>Republican hold</u>			

2010 General election – At Large Congressional District of South Dakota			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Kristi Noem	153,703	48
Democratic	Stephanie Herseth Sandlin	146,589	46
Independent	B. Thomas Marking	19,134	6
		Total votes	319,426
			100
<u>Republican gain from Democratic</u>			

2010 Republican primary election – At Large Congressional District of South Dakota ^[134]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Kristi Noem	34,527	42
Republican	Chris Nelson	28,380	35
Republican	Blake Curd	19,134	23
		Total votes	82,041
			100

Personal life

Noem lives with her husband and their three children on the Racota Valley Ranch near Castlewood. In 2010, Noem apologized for her 27 traffic citations for speeding and other infractions over a 21-year period. All fines were paid.^[135]

See also

- [Women in the United States House of Representatives](#)

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External links

- [Official site of the Governor of South Dakota](http://sd.gov/governor/) (<http://sd.gov/governor/>)
- [Kristi Noem for Governor](https://kristiforgovernor.com/) (<https://kristiforgovernor.com/>)
- [Kristi Noem](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/South_Dakota/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Kristi_Noem_%5BR-AL%5D) (https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/South_Dakota/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Kristi_Noem_%5BR-AL%5D) at Curlie
- [Appearances](https://www.c-span.org/person/?kristinoem) (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?kristinoem>) on C-SPAN
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- [Biography](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=N000184) (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=N000184>) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- [Profile](https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/58189) (<https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/58189>) at Vote Smart
- [Financial information \(federal office\)](https://www.fec.gov/data/candidate/H0SD00054) (<https://www.fec.gov/data/candidate/H0SD00054>) at the Federal Election Commission
- [Legislation sponsored](https://www.congress.gov/member/kristi-noem/2060) (<https://www.congress.gov/member/kristi-noem/2060>) at the Library of Congress

South Dakota House of Representatives

Preceded by <u>Art Frysie</u>	Member of the South Dakota House of Representatives from the 6th district 2007–2011 <small>Served alongside: Paul Nelson, Brock Greenfield</small>	Succeeded by Burt Tulson
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U.S. House of Representatives

Preceded by <u>Stephanie Herseth Sandlin</u>	Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from South Dakota's at-large congressional district 2011–2019	Succeeded by Dusty Johnson
Preceded by <u>Jaime Herrera Beutler</u>	Chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus 2015–2017	Succeeded by Susan Brooks

Party political offices

Preceded by <u>Dennis Daugaard</u>	Republican nominee for Governor of South Dakota 2018	Most recent
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Political offices

Preceded by <u>Dennis Daugaard</u>	Governor of South Dakota 2019–present	Incumbent
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U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)

Preceded by <u>Mike Pence as Vice President</u>	Order of Precedence of the United States Within South Dakota	Succeeded by Mayor of city in which event is held
		Succeeded by Otherwise Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
Preceded by <u>Doug Burgum as Governor of North Dakota</u>	Order of Precedence of the United States Outside South Dakota	Succeeded by Steve Bullock as Governor of Montana

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